



# Places of Sanctuary Ireland

**Places of Sanctuary Ireland (PoSI)** is a network of groups in towns, cities and local communities which share the objectives of promoting a culture of welcome, and inclusiveness right across every sphere and sector of society, so that wherever people seeking sanctuary go they will feel safe, find people who welcome them and understand why they are here, and have opportunities to be included in all activities.

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## Sanctuary in Faith Journey

Thank you for your interest in becoming part of the Places of Sanctuary movement! Places of worship, along with community organisations, schools, universities and businesses all have a role to play within this grass-roots movement to make Ireland's villages, towns and cities places of welcome and hospitality for those seeking sanctuary. Adopting the Statement of Commitment is just the first step. After your place of worship has done this, you will be asked to keep a record over the next number of months to document your journey. The Sanctuary journey is framed in terms of the keywords 'Learn, Embed, Share'. These are described on page 2 of this document, with a template form provided on page 3. Throughout your journey you will be invited to remain in dialogue with the Sanctuary in Faith steering committee to share your progress and also to ask for any advice or suggestions that you may need. There will also be occasional meetings (a mixture of in-person and online) for representatives of places of worship that are interested in the Sanctuary movement, or who are at different stages in the Sanctuary journey. While there is no requirement to participate, it is highly encouraged, as this allows different places of worship to share their stories, get different perspectives, and learn from one another's experiences. Building connections across the island is an important part of the Sanctuary network.

Please designate one person as the primary contact for keeping in touch with the Sanctuary in Faith steering committee. This person does not necessarily need to be the leader/clergy for your place of worship.

Churches and other faith groups located in Northern Ireland should connect with the City of Sanctuary UK Faiths Stream when seeking a Sanctuary designation:

<https://faith.cityofsanctuary.org/places-of-worship-sanctuary-award>

While the designation pathway is different between the two jurisdictions, the PoSI Faiths Stream is keen to develop connections and collaborations between faith communities across the island of Ireland.

## **‘Learn, Embed, Share’—Some Questions to Consider**

‘Learn, Embed and Share’ are the keywords of the Sanctuary journey. It is good to think of these keywords as a cycle rather than a linear process. For places well along in their Sanctuary journey, there will still be opportunities to learn new things, find new ways to embed the Sanctuary ethos, and to share inspiring stories and lessons learned. For each heading, a few questions are offered to help you think about your own context and what shape your journey should take.

### **Learn**

- Has your group/congregation reflected on the theological basis for a Sanctuary ethos in the context of your place of worship (for example the Hospitality and Sanctuary for All resource)?
- Are your members/congregants familiar with the legal processes within Ireland for those seeking International Protection? With the legal terminology around refugees? With current trends and issues within Europe surrounding asylum-seekers and refugees?
- Are you aware of newcomer communities in your area (this could be a direct provision centre, resettled refugee family, or other migrant communities)?
- Does your place of worship have a natural way of relating to newcomer communities, or will this be something new for your place of worship?
- Is your group/congregation aware of an already established Places of Sanctuary group in your village/town or connected to a school or university, or other groups who are already relating to migrant communities in your area? Are there ways to connect in and build on work that is already happening? Are there needs evident that no one is addressing?
- Are there opportunities for your members/congregants to hear first-hand from people who have been through the International Protection process in Ireland, those who have relocated as refugees, and representatives from organisations with expertise in working with asylum-seekers and refugees?

### **Embed**

- Has your place of worship been able to engage in a sustained manner with migrants, asylum-seekers, or refugees in your local area (whether on basis of a shared faith, or in the context of activities focused around intercultural or interfaith sharing)?
- Has your place of worship been able to extend hospitality through use of facilities (for example, a kitchen or meeting room) to migrants, asylum-seekers, or refugees in your local area?
- Are there opportunities for migrants, asylum-seekers or refugees in your local area to share aspects of their culture in which they take pride (for example, sharing food, cultural performances, traditions or local festivals from their country of origin)?
- Are issues of justice around asylum and international protection regularly highlighted in relevant ways within your place of worship (for example, including these issues in prayer, mention within sermons)?
- Are there relevant international observances that are marked in the context of your place of worship (for example, Refugee Week, Sanctuary Sunday, Racial Justice Sunday, World Day of the Poor, International Migrants Day)?
- Does your place of worship participate in relevant local networks and activities (for example, local Places of Sanctuary group, anti-racism activities, local diversity or welcome initiatives)?
- Are there developing relationships of friendship, such that migrants, asylum-seekers, or refugees in your local area can help your place of worship to understand what types of practical assistance would be most helpful for those making a new life in Ireland?
- Has a team/committee been formed and recognised by the leadership of your place of worship to help sustain your Sanctuary efforts?

### **Share**

- Are your Sanctuary activities highlighted and described on your website, social media, and/or newsletter (in a manner this is also sensitive to privacy and safeguarding concerns)?
- Are voices and perspectives of asylum-seeking friends part of how you present your story publicly?
- Are there ways that you can reach out to others within your network/denomination to increase the awareness of the Sanctuary movement and encourage them as well to get involved?

| What event/activity was undertaken?  | Who was involved?  | When did this happen?           |
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| <p><b>Learn</b></p> <p><i>Ex: Small group discussion over 4 weeks using the 'Hospitality and Sanctuary for All' resource</i></p>   | <p><i>A small group of 12 members of the congregation, including the minister and 2 of the members of the parish council</i></p>   | <p><i>September-October</i></p> |
| <p><b>Embed</b></p> <p><i>Ex. Some residents of nearby direct provision centre began to help out occasionally with tidy up in the grounds of the church. A representative from the centre is now a regular member of the volunteer team who look after the grounds, and a small section of the church yard has been given over as an allotment for residents of the centre to grow vegetables and herbs.</i></p> | <p><i>The volunteer yard-work team, along with residents from the nearby centre</i></p>  | <p><i>April-present</i></p>     |
| <p><b>Share</b></p> <p><i>Ex. After making new connections and friendships, an intercultural celebration day was organised, including food and various performances. It was advertised in the town and local dignitaries took part in the day.</i></p>   | <p><i>The team that organised the event included life-long members, along with newcomers to the local area, and the team worked together over several months to plan and organise the event.</i></p> | <p><i>May-July</i></p>          |